REVIEWS OF NEW FICTION

Between Joanna and Lady Joan

MARTIN CONISBY'S VENGEANCE. By Jeffery Farnol. Little, Brown & Co.

"BLACK BARTLEMY'S TREASURE," to which "Martin Conisby's Vengeance" is a sequel, opened with one of the most immediately arresting sentences imaginable: "The Frenchman beside me had been dead since dawn." Thereupon followed the description of the slaves in the rowing benches of the Spanish galleass, of the fight with the English ship and of the subsequent adventures of Martin Conisby in quest of revenge.

With something of the same immediacy the later book opens with Martin's prayer for vengeance upon his enemy, and with the coming to his desert island of the pirate, Joanna.

Here is a swashbuckling situation worthy of Jeffery Farnol—buccaneers, a fair lady, another fair who is not quite a lady, rapiers, Indians, tortures of the Inquisition, a jungle journey, mutiny upon the high seas—and a happy ending. There is but one lack—the glorious Farnolese countrymen whom we met first upon "The Broad Highway," and who trudged through the earlier chapters of "Black Bartlemy's Treasure." One yearns occasionally for the sight of a broad back, smock garbed, or for the equally broad dialect with which Gregory or Hodge greeted the reader and the hero, for the alehouses and hedge taverns, for the pretty serving wenches.

The mysterious island whereupon Martin had previously been cast in company with the fair Lady Joan Brandon is the opening scene of "Martin Conisby's Vengeance." The Lady Joan has gone, for three years Martin has prayed for vengeance upon his enemy, her father. And now we understand why "Black Bartlemy's Treasure" ended with the departure of Lady Joan. If Martin had gone along with her there would have been no sequel, unless it were that of a married man—and the author doesn't like his heroes married. So he held Martin over until the last chapter of the sequel.

The perfect Farnol hero is unmarried and under 30. None others need apply. Call elsewhere; there are Arnold Bennett and H. G. Wells and Julian Street and enough others clamoring for the benedict of 35 and more. Give us youth and love and romance! And no realism. What ho!

A realistic hero would scarcely have chosen to sit on a desert island for three years waiting for vengeance. He would have taken to bootlegging or been eaten by a wild beast or slowly died upon the stark white cliffs overlooking the sea toward the north—or else he would have sailed off with Lady Joan in the first place, giving up his vengeance because it really didn't pay nowadays, with the overhead and the intake and the upkeep and the underhand.

Considering that Martin's enemy was Lady Joan's father it might have been more subtle to marry her and worry her father to death over the way bills were running up and the family estates were running down.

Martin wasn't that mean kind, however. He wanted to see his enemy die by inches, dripping visible gore. He wanted to be on hand to taunt Sir Richard with the past, and to tell him over and over again how much luckier he was to be dying by inches than to have been chained to the oar of a Spanish galleass.

So Martin stayed and stayed. But a desert island is no place for a nice young man, all alone. So his author sends him Joanna, the pirate.

Joanna has sailed the Spanish Main for years and been friends with ever so many of the boldest pirate captains until the ruffian crews of the Main shudder at her slightest word. In other words she has a reputation. But Martin hasn't been receiving the Sunday papers regularly for the last three years, and his only experience with women has been his thoroughly respectable life on the desert island with Lady Joan. He isn't prepared at all for Joanna and her wiles.

And Joanna likes him. Quite frankly. Martin is an interesting respite from the brawny, brutal buccaneers who have been her playmates.

But Martin is true to the memory of Lady Joan—even way off on the island where no society reporters ever come. And Joanna is told to keep her distance. Becoming slightly piqued she tries to poison our hero. That proves ineffectual, so she saves his life two or three times. Still he is true to Lady Joan.

Martin was a safe man to be alone with upon a desert island. He had been tested twice and came out each time ninety-nine and forty-four hundredths per cent. a hero. He respected Lady Joan because he loved her and she was a lady—lower case as well as upper; and he respected Joanna, the pirate, because he didn't love her and she was no lady. What ho!

Be that as it may, let us render thanks for Martin Conisby. He is the sole survivor of the old school of romance. We need him. He reminds us that we ought to read "Black Bartlemy's Treasure" all over again—and that some one borrowed our "Treasure Island" a year ago. We must look it up. Then we shall shove "Dangerous Ages" and "Main Street" and "Brass" and "The Mirrors of Washington" out of the way and settle down in a big armchair before a crackling fire on the gray hearth.

CORNELIA P. LATHROP.

Can Dreams Be Governed by Will?

A THIRD OF LIFE. By Perriton Maxwell. Small, Maynard & Co.

FEW of us realize that a third of our lives are passed in a fantastic empire of dreams—a great psychologist has asserted that we dream every minute that we sleep—and fewer still realize that the waking two-thirds are profoundly influenced by the dreams of the fantastic third. May not this account for the evident absurdity, illogicality and topsy-turviness of life?

Mr. Maxwell in his fascinating romance of our underworld life answers in the affirmative. Life is at every moment influenced by our dreams. He has applied the methods of psychoanalysis to the acts of his characters and studies them in their actions and interactions through the microscope of their dreams.

"A Third of Life" is at once a novel and a philosophy. It deals with everyday people, but deals with them in an original manner. They have the appearance of somnambulists—straws afloat on the great subconscious seas of the soul; imps of perversity made so by inherited memories and phantasms of sleep.

As the story—brilliant and clear in itself—runs along the theory of dreams as the most potent influence in life is expounded by the hero of the book, who is a "dream doctor" with an enormous clientele. He himself was the victim of a frightful dream. From his fifth year onward he went through the horrible experience every night of falling from a balloon at a great height. He was born with this dream, for his mother had attended a circus while she was pregnant with him, and while in that condition she saw an acrobat fall from a balloon at a dizzy height.

This led him to study dreams with an attempt to discover whether dreams could not be regulated by the will. If this once became possible one-third of man's life could be turned into an adventure which would outdo all fairy tales and the dreams of poets. To will a marvellous dream until it comes to pass exactly as willed and so influence the conduct of the waking subject that life itself gradually is changed to a fairy tale! Could there be a more fascinating theme worked out in fiction

"Why, since we all dream," asks the dream doctor of Adrian, his sceptical friend, "shouldn't we make some effort to dream entertainingly, perhaps usefully? Why not try before going to sleep to marshal our thoughts on the playground of suggestion, so that instead of an assortment of tangled, footloose ideas shaping our dreams we may enjoy our whimsies in some sort of sequence?"

The most remarkable of the patients of this dream detective was Amos Mordick, who had a great desire to communicate by any means with his lost wife. How Mordick's thoughts and dreams under the direction of the dream therapeutist finally bring about this miracle constitute one of the most original and thrilling bits of fact that ever appeared in the guise of psychological fiction.

So precise is Mr. Maxwell in expounding his theories through his characters that I would not be surprised if "A Third of Life" should start a furor and a cult like that which was begun by George du Maurier's "Peter Ibbetson" and his theory of "dreaming true."

There are some extraordinary and grotesque photographs in "A Third of Life" of real dreams—the first that have ever been made, the author claims.

An amazing, original and thrilling work of dream fiction.

BENJAMIN DE CASSERES.

"Villain, Unlock That Door!"

C. N. and A. M. Williamson.

THE BRIGHTENER. By C. N. and A. M. Williamson. Doubleday, Page, & Co.

VISION HOUSE. By C. N. and A. M. Williamson. George H. Doran Company.

ALTHOUGH C. N. Williamson is dead the "firm name" of C. N. and A. M. Williamson continues. "This is because I feel very strongly," says the C. N. part of the combination in a preface to "The Brightener," the firm's latest book, "that my husband helps me with the work even more than he was able to do in this world. I always had his advice, and when we took motor tours he gave me his notes to use. But now there is far more help than that. I cannot explain in words; I can only feel. And because of that feeling I could not bear to have the 'C. N.' disappear from the title page."

"The Brightener" is the story of the Princess di Miramire, who, when her husband is killed in the war, is left with nothing but a title and her health. She has to have a means of making a living, so with the aid of friends she creates a new profession —"brightening." "My widowhood," observes the young princess in explaining the new profession, "qualified me to become a chaperon. And my princesshood would make me a gilded one. Chaperonage at its best might be amusing. But chaperonage was far from the whole destiny of a Brightener. A Brightener need not confine herself to female society, as a mere companion must. A young woman, even though a widow and a princess, could not 'companion' a person of the opposite sex, even if he were a hundred. But she might, from a discreet distance, be his Brightener. That is, she might brighten a lonely man's life without tarnishing her own reputation."

As a Brightener the Princess succeeds in brightening the lives of a number of tragic young men who had "unfortunate affairs" early in life. Incidentally she earns some fabulous fees for her trouble. If book reviewing were not so profitable we would take up brightening too.

The Princess has some spirited adventures. These are set forth in the form of four separate novelettes, all of them entertaining. We only quarrel with the book when it introduces German spies and half the nobility of Europe. We can stand an occasional viscount or earl, but when the landscape is choked with noblemen we want to get out our rifle and have some target practice. One of these noblemen—Sir Jim Courtenaye, formerly an American cowboy—puzzles us. A title to a ranch is the only title a cowboy would want, it seems to us.

There are some good mysteries in "The Brightener. One of these, the mystery of the floating coffin, is handled with unusual skill.

We found "Vision House," another recent Williamson product, less entertaining than "The Brightener."

An English nobleman, the Earl of Severance, and John Garth, an American, who has won a V. C. in the English army, are both in love with Marise Sorel, internationally famous American actress. Who wins? . . . Of course! But Garth's victory is not an easy one, and the many obstacles he encounters and the way he overcomes them are graphically set forth in "Vision House."

His methods, which involve everything from squirting ginger ale at his rival through a cabin window to flashing a revolver in his face, are always diverting. The ginger ale scene will appeal to Charlie Chaplin fans and the revolver episode to devotees of William S. Hart, and as there are millions of these "Vision House" should not experience any difficulty in finding an audience.

The love story takes a unique turn, and even the most implacable foes of novelistic sensation will be forced to admit that the authors have succeeded in being sensational *differently*. They have provided what Roi Cooper Megrue once called "a new angle on the triangle." The result is one of the spiciest marital mixups that we have encountered in a long time, culminating in much trianguish for Severance, who has probably blown his brains out—we mean killed himself—by now. Like most of the other characters, he hasn't any brains to blow out.

If you like fast moving, red blooded fiction, with a sprinkling of yellow streaked blue blood, you will enjoy "Vision House." It won't inspire you, but it will probably give you some thrills, especially where the air is thick with cries of "You cad!" and "You vixen!" and where Garth grimly commands the wretched earl who has imprisoned the fair Marise, "Unlock that door, Severance!" He does, and the Earl-y bird loses the worm.

By the way, lovers of pugilism will revel in some fisticuffs in which the American destroys the Englishman's beauty by knocking out one of his front teeth. Score another victory for Uncle Sam in the realm of international sport.

XAVIER LYNDON.

Two Destinies

CHILDREN OF THE WHIRLWIND. By Leroy Scott. Houghton Mifflin Company.

MR. SCOTT is an adept at burglarizing the imagination, and so his world of artists and gangsters and jailbirds is surprisingly real. His heroine is balanced between two destinies, she may yield to the criminal environment in which she is placed, or perhaps she will sustain the hero, a reformed criminal, in his efforts to go straight. The reader is left in doubt until the very last moment as to what her fate will be. Thrill follows thrill with the throbbing regularity of a screen drama, and the issue is often in doubt.

Hunting and Fighting in India

THE ELEPHANT GOD. By Gordon Casserly. G. P. Putnam's Sons.

WE looked at the cover, and from the title decided that another author had gone India crazy. But there was an elephant in it, and according to the jacket the elephant and Major Dermont shared the place of "hero." Our animal loving nature predominated, and we mustered enough courage to read another story of the ignorance and superstition of India.

Before we had gone three chapters in the book we discovered that the author knew what he was writing about and also that he knew more than he wrote. He has been in the country he describes and has hunted, has made friends of, the elephant. Being in the service he writes from the angle of the soldier as well as from that of the hunter and lover of the forest and its inhabitants.

When we came to Noreen we knew we should not be able to miss a single word of the book—and we didn't. Not even the terrible parts about the Rajah who was most wicked and the Bengali who was treacherous and the bloody uprisings. The elephant Badshah was there, and so was Major Dermont, and most likely in some unexpected page Noreen would make her wholesome appearance. She is the woman who makes a soldier's wife.

We wandered with Major Dermont in his official travels, we studied with him the habits of the elephant and his Badshah in particular. We grew to love Badshah as we would a dog that was beside us through our daily experiences. We followed him on his hunting trips, on his pleasure trips, to a dance, to a weird Indian ceremony, through hours of torture and murderous attempts on the Major's life.

One forgets book reviewing in a story like this. As a matter of duty it should be affirmed that the style is pleasing and the author says what he has to say, and what he has to say is just what the reader can most enjoy. From the point of view of a human being and a lover of a good story we have found this book "corkin' good."

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